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JOINT MILITARY BASES: POWER PROJECTION PLATFORMS FOR THE 21ST CENTURY

BY

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Joint Military Bases: Power Projection Platforms for the 21st Century

by

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ABSTRACT

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The Department of Defense(DOD) spends about one third of its operations and maintenance budget for base support services and functions. Pressure to continue reducing the DOD budget will continue. This study maintains that it is no longer efficient or effective to maintain separate Army, Air Force, Navy, and Marine Corps military bases. DOD must start now to transition to consolidated, joint military bases as power projection platforms for the 21st century. This paper examines the resources that could be saved by consolidating military bases that are adjacent or in close proximity to one another. It also examines how the concept of joint military bases will enhance the effectiveness of joint military operations. Challenges and solutions to consolidating military bases are also addressed.

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Introduction

Although support functions use 55 percent of the Pentagon's total budget, they "do not provide the required responsiveness, nor are they matched to the new rapid and flexible styles of warfare."

--- Defense Science Board Report, November 1996

By their nature, military bases are expensive to operate. As power projection platforms for our stateside forces, they require lots of people and infrastructure to perform their mission. In fact, the U.S. General Accounting Office estimated that 30 percent of the Air Force's and 32 percent of the Army's fiscal year 1995 operations and maintenance budgets were devoted strictly to base support activities.² These percentages grow substantially when all functions that support the warfighter are included. In fact, the final report of the 1996 Summer Study of the Defense Science Board concluded that military support functions actually consume 55 percent of the defense budget. ³

There is a crisis in the resourcing of our military bases that support the warfighter. One DoD official estimates that for fiscal year 1998, DoD is \$6-\$7 billion ⁴ short in meeting basic-level base operations requirements. In order to help alleviate this multibillion dollar shortfall we need to have a revolution in the way we resource and manage our defense bases. We must have a vision to maximize readiness, while at the same time reducing costs, for our 21st century military bases.

Military bases that are operated by and for only one military service (Army, Air Force, Navy, or Marine Corps) are inefficient luxuries that the Department of Defense and the American taxpayer can no longer afford. To correct these inefficiencies, military bases should be consolidated and regionalized wherever there are multiple Services

stationed in the same geographic area. These consolidated, joint military bases would be the home for all military units located in the same geographic area, regardless of branch of service or component, i.e., Active, Reserve, or National Guard. For example, in the Seattle-Tacoma area, a joint military base could include:

- The Army's I Corps and subordinate units (now at Fort Lewis).
- The 62d Support Group and subordinate units (now at McChord Air Force Base).
- Navy and Marine Corps units stationed in the area.
- Reserve and National Guard units (all Services) stationed in the area.

These consolidated, joint military bases would be America's power projection platforms for the 21st century.

This is a time of constrained resources for the Department of Defense. The Army, like the other military services, is faced with major shortfalls in weapons modernization.

And, in the words of Army Chief of Staff General Dennis Reimer, "we will either become more efficient or we will become smaller. My desire is to become more efficient."

Although efficiencies and budget constraints may be the driving force in the creation of joint military bases, the effectiveness of military operations will also be greatly enhanced by consolidated, joint military bases. Reasons for this enhanced effectiveness, as well as other operational advantages will be discussed in this paper, as will the disadvantages and challenges to consolidating military bases. Lastly, potential sites, organizational structures, and funding flow/fiscal concept plans will be detailed.

Background - The Way It Is Now

Currently, a military service is given "ownership" (executive agency) for a specific military base. With ownership comes funding from the parent Service's annual budget. This money is used to pay for the base's civilian workforce, supplies, services, and equipment needed to support the military units and troops assigned to the base. However, when an activity of one Service, e.g., the Air Force, is a tenant on a sister Service's base, e.g., the Army, then that tenant must reimburse the "owner" for supplies and services it receives as a result of living and working on that base. This complicated process of providing support from one Service to another is specified by the Defense Regional Interservice Support (DRIS) Program. The document which describes the agreement between the supplier and the customer is called the Inter-Service Support Agreement.

This process of the Army providing supplies and services to the Air Force, or vice versa, becomes even more complicated once the financial wheels start turning and the Air Force reimburses the Army for the cost of supplies and services it used. This reimbursement procedure and transfer of money from one account to another is handled by the Defense Finance and Accounting Service (DFAS). Since DFAS is operated like a commercial business using Defense Business Operating Fund (DBOF) principles, the Services must pay for work performed by DFAS.

The bottomline is that when the Air Force reimburses the Army (or vice versa) for services and supplies it received from the Army, this increases the accounting workload and thereby increases the bills to be paid to DFAS by the individual Services. This

process of inter-service support and reimbursement is extremely inefficient and is, in some respects, a "full employment" program for the accountants. It also adds to the overhead cost of running a military base. Adoption of the proposed joint military base concept would eliminate the need for this inter-service reimbursement to occur.

While the current policy and practice of inter-service reimbursements increases the cost of doing business, high overhead costs are also due to a high ratio of supervisors to workers. Consolidating military bases could help to reduce this ratio of supervisors to workers, by combining duplicate functions and staffs. Combining duplicate functions and staff would, in turn, reduce overhead costs.

Change is Coming

As discussed, the current system for managing military base operations is inefficient and expensive. Dramatic change to this system <u>will</u> occur as the DoD grapples with strategies and concepts for a viable post-Cold War military structure. The military Services can be proactive and guide change — or they can be run over by it.

Indicative of this dramatic change is the final report of the 1996 Defense Science Board Summer Study Task Force. This report, "Achieving an Innovative Support Structure for 21st Century Military Superiority," recommends a new vision for 21st century support — a vision where DoD performs only those functions that are "inherently governmental." This means that only warfighting (and other military operations), direct (battlefield) support, policy and decision making, and oversight would be performed by

DoD. All other functions, to include base operations, would be provided by the competitive private sector through outsourcing.

Clearly, the window of opportunity is now open. Efficiencies are going to be achieved in one way or another. The Services must choose what they want. The alternatives are:

- A contractor-run base support operation using the current organizational structure of a <u>single-Service</u> "owning" specific bases, with tenants reimbursing for goods and services received, or
- A military-run joint base support operation where military bases located in a geographic region are consolidated/regionalized, or
- A <u>hybrid joint military base</u>, where a contractor provides some of the base support services, and the in-house workforce provides the balance, or
- A <u>hybrid single-Service base</u>, where a contractor provides some of the base support services, and the in-house workforce provides the balance.

Each of the above options has advantages and disadvantages. DoD and the Services need to look at all options, rather than blindly accepting the option of outsourcing (as recommended by the 1996 Defense Science Board) without considering the option of joint base support operations being performed wholly or partially by the in-house workforce.

Outsourcing Base Support May Not Be the Solution

Outsourcing has been the managerial buzz word for the past several years.

Formerly known as contracting out, outsourcing is now in vogue. The 1996 Defense

Science Board's recommended vision for 21st century support is one in which all

functions that are not inherently governmental will be outsourced. To meet this call for

outsourcing, the military Services have had to revive their Commercial Activities'

programs. They are also reacquainting themselves with the principles behind OMB

Circular A-76 and other guidelines for managing commercial activities.

Their goal is to increase the efficiency of military base commercial activities through outsourcing. To accomplish this, the Services conduct A-76 studies of commercial-type functions performed on their bases. Typically, the majority of these positions are in the base logistics and public works functions -- activities like base supply and transportation, operation of dining facilities, maintenance of vehicles and other equipment, and maintenance of building and grounds.

As part of the A-76 process, the in-house workforce is given the opportunity to streamline their operations prior to being "competed" against private sector contractors for award of the contract. It is significant to note that the Army's experience over the past two decades has shown that the in-house government operation wins about half the time. With this favorable track record, the military Services need to ensure that we don't "jump the gun" and automatically assume that outsourcing provides the best quality service at the lowest cost.

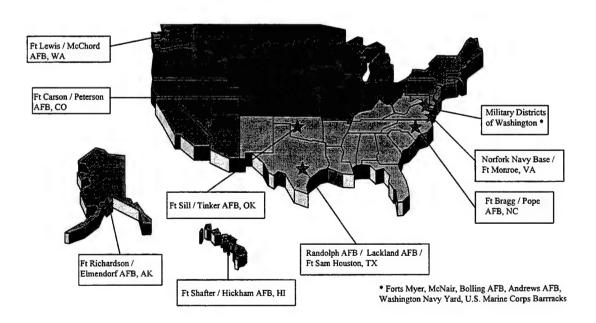
Scope of This Research Paper

Because of the breadth of the idea, this paper focuses primarily on the consolidation and regionalization of Army and Air Force bases that share common boundaries or are in close proximity to each other. These should be the first locations to consolidate because, being co-located, they would be the least complicated to transition to joint military bases. There are many such co-located bases. The following list names just a few:

- Fort Lewis and McChord Air Force Base in Tacoma, Washington.
- Fort Richardson and Elmendorf Air Force Base in Anchorage, Alaska.
- Fort Bragg and Pope Air Force Base in Fayetteville, North Carolina.
- Fort Carson and Peterson Air Force Base in Colorado Springs, Colorado.

A map of potential sites is shown below.

Potential Sites for Joint Military Bases



The scope of this paper also excludes military family housing. The current trend is for the military Services to divest themselves of owning and managing family housing. Increasingly, military housing is being turned over to the private sector to build and manage. DoD is also looking at potential incentives for the private sector to provide a sufficient supply of housing near military bases. In fact, the recently released Defense Science Board task force report stated that within the United States, DoD should get out of the housing business and rely on adequate housing allowances and market forces to provide the required housing. Therefore, joint military family housing will not be discussed.

Past Attempts to Consolidate Base Support Operations

Throughout 1995, Fort Lewis and its parent command, Forces Command, investigated the feasibility of "partnering" with nearby McChord Air Force Base. The partnership was to focus on sharing base operations resources in order to gain efficiencies and save money on both bases. Ultimately, refuse (garbage) collection and disposal were the only areas in which Fort Lewis and McChord AFB were able to partner and negotiate a joint contract with a private sector contractor. The balance of the concept plan never got off the ground due to the lack of Air Force's willingness to participate as part of the working group.⁷

This hesitation and lack of willingness to consolidate base operations support is not unique to the Air Force. Virtually all the Services prefer to retain their own base operations support, independent of the other Services. After all, it is less complex to

provide base support services to a homogeneous group that has shared quality of life expectations and standards than it is to provide these same services to a diverse group of warfighters who have different cultures, support expectations, and quality of life standards. As discussed in the next section, these cultural differences will be a major hurdle that must be overcome.

Challenges and Solutions to Consolidating Military Bases

"Before you can effect any significant change, you've first got to understand your company's culture."

--Hammer and Champy in Reengineering the Corporation

Perhaps the biggest challenge to successfully implementing joint military bases are the separate and distinct military cultures. The passage of Goldwater-Nichols DoD Reorganization Act of 1986 has made joint operations, joint education, and joint systems a fact-of-life in today's military environment. Yet, much inter-service rivalry and parochialism remain.

Most Air Force members believe that their quality of life standards are superior to those of the Army, Navy, and Marine Corps. Transition to joint military bases would, in their eyes, compromise their quality of life and degrade operational readiness. In addition, Air Force officials believe that retention of their highly trained, highly-technical workforce is directly related to their high quality of life. Therefore, transitioning to joint military bases could possibly hurt Air Force recruiting and retention rates.

The solution to these cultural barriers is to develop joint quality of life standards.

These standards will ensure a consistent quality of life for all armed service members

regardless of which base they are assigned, or to which branch of the armed forces they belong. But, a word of caution is offered. Based on the experiences of the Canadian Defence Forces during their own process to consolidate, these quality of life standards should be established <u>prior</u> to consolidation -- not after consolidation.⁹

A second major challenge that must be solved prior to transitioning to joint military bases is the question of "Who commands?" Three options appear most viable. The first option would call for the base commander to alternate among the Services. Since the normal length of command is two years, then every two years when the command changed it would go to another Service. For example, the first base commander of the McChord-Lewis Joint Military Base could be an Air Force Colonel (or vice versa). After two years, and upon his or her change-of-command, it would pass to an Army Colonel.

The second option for the question "Who commands?" is to designate a specific Service to fill the position, similar to the way DoD designates a Service to fill the positions of the geographic Commanders in Chiefs (CINCs). This decision could be based on which Service is dominant in the area, either in terms of mission or in terms of number of assigned personnel. The primary advantage of this option is that it provides greater continuity.

The third option for the question "Who commands?" is to designate a DoD civilian as the commander or "base manager-director." This option is particularly attractive to those individuals who believe that base operations and other support functions are not core military competencies, and as such should be performed by

civilians -- either DoD civilians or contractors. This option is similar to the current structure found in DoD agencies, such as the Defense Finance and Accounting Service (DFAS), Defense Information Support Agency (DISA), and the Defense Commissary Agency (DECA). All are led by DoD civilians. This option is also supported by the 1996 Defense Science Board task force which recently reported that a new division of labor between the military and civilian sectors "is crucial to the long-term military superiority of the U.S." In fact, the Army already has a cadre of more than 75 professionally trained civilians that are currently working as deputy Garrison Commanders at Army bases worldwide.

Advantages

"Our military must evolve from independent, single-service institutions. Services designed to go it alone need to transform to complementary land, air and sea forces that are contributors to a deployable and coherent joint force team."

-- Marine General John J. Shehan, U.S. Atlantic Command

Although the driving force in the creation of joint military bases is to save money, this is not the biggest advantage. Enhanced operational readiness and the ability to fight effectively in joint military operations are the biggest and most important advantages of joint bases. Joint military operations will become routine as a result of working and training daily on the same base. Daily contact brought about by close physical proximity will help break down the cultural barriers that so often inhibit the effectiveness and responsiveness of joint operations. Cultural distinctions, such as Service-unique jargon, will most likely blend together. Military communications will be enhanced. Interoperability of equipment and forces will also be enhanced. This forced operational

jointness should have a cascade effect into all functional areas of the military Services, thus making joint military operations the preferred method of operating and fighting.

The concept of joint military bases also greatly enhances the military's increasing involvement in disaster relief, humanitarian assistance, and military operations other than war. Typically, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), such as the Red Cross, are heavily involved in these relief and assistance efforts with the military. Joint bases, with a single support structure will streamline actions required for NGOs and private volunteer organizations (PVOs) planning to participate in relief efforts. Streamlining their actions for deployments will work to the advantage of our military and our country. Increasingly, the U.S. government will rely on these organizations to help respond to natural disasters, humanitarian, and peace keeping missions. Some of these NGOs and private volunteer organizations, e.g., Doctors Without Borders, may even want to rent space on these joint military installations so as to be better positioned for responding and deploying to future missions.

A third major advantage of joint military bases is reduced overhead and streamlined support staffs. Combining Army garrison staffs with Air Force, Navy, and Marine Corps base support staffs will eliminate many people from these redundant support functions. Significant savings could be achieved through consolidation of these overhead support functions. For example, Fort Lewis' staff determined that both Fort Lewis and McChord AFB had many people performing the same types of operational and administrative functions. Many of these duplicative staffs and functions are listed below:

Base Management Staffs.

- Public Works Organizations (to include repair and maintenance, fire protection, and environmental programs).
- Plans, Training and Security Organizations (to include airfields, emergency operations centers, and museums).
- Community and Family Activities (to include libraries, gyms, child care centers, golf courses, community clubs, education service centers, arts and crafts centers, and youth services centers).
- Base Supply and Logistics (to include food service, transportation, and maintenance activities).
- Information Management Support (to include telephone and computer support, and pager and radio trunking services).
- Civilian Personnel Offices.
- Purchasing and Contracting Offices.
- Equal Employment Opportunity Offices.
- Chaplain Activities.
- Public Affairs Offices.
- Protocol Offices.
- Police and Security Services.
- Financial Management Offices.
- Safety Offices.
- Historians.

All of these functions and staffs could be consolidated, thus creating more streamlined operations, with reductions in the administrative overhead. In fact, Fort Lewis conservatively estimated that administrative overhead could be reduced by ten to fifteen percent if the joint military base concept was implemented. Although this may not sound like a lot, one must remember that DoD has already been drastically downsized during the past seven years. Most DoD organizations are about as lean as they can get unless additional missions are taken away.

The Army's Public Works could be consolidated with the Air Force's Base

Engineers. Engineers, plumbers, electricians, etc. would provide service to the Lewis
McChord joint base. Management and supervisory overhead would then be reduced. A

larger percentage of the engineer workforce would be actively engaged in performing
their mission as opposed to managing and supervising. Central contracts could be
awarded and administered in a similar combined fashion. The result of this consolidation
of overhead support functions is a streamlined organization saving significant amounts of
money through economies of scale. These savings could then be redirected to the much
needed modernization of the fighting force.

The final advantage of transitioning to joint military bases is that the military continues to perform base operations support rather than turning it over to private sector contractors to perform. However, this would be an advantage only if the military and DoD civilians were able to provide a qualitatively better, more responsive product or service at a lower cost than the contractor. Initial information indicates that with

reduction in overhead and layering, and the elimination of duplication of effort, the cost effectiveness and responsiveness of joint military bases would be significantly enhanced.

Disadvantages

Politically and economically, the disadvantages of transitioning to joint military bases are similar to those encountered with any type of private or public downsizing — jobs will be lost, communities will feel the negative financial impact of a base consolidation or closure, military retirees may have to travel further to receive services, etc. From an operational perspective, management will have a larger span of control and more responsibility. Also, management will no longer have the fiscal flexibility of being able to migrate funding from base operations accounts to training, or vice versa. From a military perspective, there will also be a loss of tradition. Lastly, and most importantly, some military officers perceive that there will be increased risk in accomplishing a successful deployment from the joint military base. This perception of increased risk is linked to the fact that an operational commander would no longer own the base support personnel needed to help deploy his or her unit.

Disadvantages of transitioning to joint military bases should be carefully reviewed and accessed. However, this researcher has concluded that none of the disadvantages outweigh the advantages of transitioning to joint military bases.

Funding for Joint Military Bases

Throughout 1995, Forces Command (FORSCOM) and Fort Lewis examined the proposal for a joint base operations organization with McChord Air Force Base. As discussed earlier, the proposal never got off the ground due to lack of the Air Force's willingness to participate in the working group. ¹⁴ Air Force's lack of participation was due to concerns that their quality of life and mission readiness would be severely degraded by a consolidated, joint base operations organization. In addition, both sides were concerned about being taken over by the other.

To prevent this perception that one base will be taken over by another, the bases should become DoD assets, belonging neither to the Army, the Air Force, Navy, nor the Marine Corps. Rather, they would be truly joint military bases -- in every sense of the word. Like other joint DoD organizations, their personnel billets would be "purple" and their funding would be "purple." Funding would flow from DoD directly to the joint military base.

This concept of funding a joint military base directly from the Defense

Department, rather than from a Service, is counter to the current trend within DoD.

Currently, the Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD) prefers to "devolve" funding to the Services for administration and management of military bases. This devolution of funding shifts the workload for the fiscal management and oversight of these funds from OSD to the Services. Although this may be expedient for DoD, it would not be an effective method for funding a joint military base. The idea of having one of the Services (Army, Air Force, Navy, or Marine Corps) act as the "executive agent" for the funding is

counter-productive to the concept of joint military bases. The perception that the Service who handles the money also owns the base would be hard to dispel. The bottom line is that the current trend of making one Service the executive agent should <u>not</u> be used as a funding method for joint military bases.

Recommendations

DoD must start now to transition to joint military bases. Joint bases will enhance the effectiveness of joint military operations and will save significant amounts of money. The following recommendations are provided in order to aid this transition and create a win-win environment whenever possible.

Recommendation #1: DoD must get a "buy in" from Congress.

Consolidation into joint military bases will mean that some people lose their jobs. In addition, some bases may end up being closed, thus having negative financial impacts on some communities.

Recommendation #2. Involve all of the Services in the development of joint quality of life standards. These are standards against which DoD will distribute funds to the joint military bases for their base operations support.

Recommendation #3: Use a phased or incremental approach. Start the consolidation process with Army and Air Force bases that are in close proximity to each other. As discussed earlier, there are numerous locations that fit this criteria. Once these consolidations are successfully achieved, then incorporate Navy and Marine Corps units and bases into the joint military base concept.

Recommendation #4. This concept of joint military bases should be used as criteria or as a tool for nominating military bases for closure and realignment. Experts within and outside of DoD agree that another round of Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) is needed in order to right-size the defense infrastructure.

Recommendation #5: Military commanders should be retained as base commanders for those joint bases with direct warfighting missions. However, professionally-trained DoD civilians should be designated as managers or directors for joint military bases that are primarily used for combat support and administration. This has the dual advantage of allowing uniformed military personnel to focus on the warfighting aspects of the military mission, while leaving the combat support and administrative support bases for civilian professionals to manage.

Recommendation #6: Immediately make the joint military base a DoD asset. Fund it with money and manpower billets that flow directly from the Office of the Secretary of Defense to the joint base. As discussed earlier, do not make one of the Services the executive agent.

Recommendation #7: Encourage private volunteer organizations, such as Doctors Without Borders, to rent office space on these joint military bases. Having all of the players together will enhance the responsiveness and effectiveness of future disaster relief and humanitarian efforts.

Recommendation #8. Be patient. Studies have shown that it usually takes an organization between five to ten years to make a complete cultural change. ¹⁶

Transition to joint military bases will involve profound cultural changes.

Conclusion

DoD should begin transitioning to consolidated joint military bases. These joint bases will enhance:

- operational readiness,
- the ability to fight in a joint environment, and
- the ability to conduct disaster relief, humanitarian assistance, and military operations other than war.

Joint military bases will also provide the required responsiveness to match the flexible styles of warfare and military operations likely to be performed in the 21st century. To help make this an effective transition, the military Services must actively support and guide this transition to ensure that the most effective and efficient base operations structures are implemented. America's military readiness depends on it.

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